

*Prof Norton*

THE  
SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETER.

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CONTENTS.

TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION — MATT. XVII. 1—13, . . . . .	241
THE BOOK OF JOB, . . . . .	247
MISTRANSLATIONS IN THE COMMON VERSIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, — GOSPEL OF JOHN, . . . . .	251
THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, . . . . .	262
VALUE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS, . . . . .	275

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#### EDITORS' NOTICE.

This number completes the fifth volume of the Interpreter. It is the wish of the Editors to continue its publication, but unless the list of subscribers is very much increased, it will be impossible. Proper exertions will be used to enlarge the number, and if successful, the first volume will commence on the first of January. Should the work be continued the Editors will endeavor to make it acceptable, and to secure its regular publication.

#### NOTICE.

The present No. completes Vol. 5 of the Interpreter. Subscribers who are in arrears for the work, will confer a favor by an immediate remittance of the amount due to the Publishers.

## TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION.

## MATTHEW XVII. 1—13.

1 And after six days, Jesus takes Peter, James and John his brother, and leads them aside upon 2 a very high mountain, and was changed in appearance before them, and his face shone like the sun, 3 and his garments became white as the light. And behold there appeared unto them, Moses and Elias conversing with him.

4 And Peter answering said unto Jesus, Lord, it is well that we should be here; if thou art willing, let us make here three tents, one for thee, and one 5 for Moses, and one for Elias. While he was still speaking, behold a cloud of light surrounded them, and behold a voice from the cloud declaring, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well 6 pleased; hear ye him." And when the disciples heard it, they fell upon their faces, and were much 7 afraid. And Jesus coming near, touched them, 8 and said, Arise, and fear not. And lifting up their eyes they saw no man, but only Jesus.

9 And as they descended from the mountain, Jesus commanded them saying, Tell this sight to no man, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then do the scribes say that Elias must come first?

11 And Jesus answering said to them, Elias indeed 12 comes first, and will restore all things. But I tell

you that Elias is already come, and they did not receive him, but did to him whatever they pleased, and thus shall the Son of Man suffer by them.  
 13 Then his disciples perceived that he spoke to them of John the Baptist.

## EXPOSITION.

Christ was still in Galilee, perhaps in the vicinity of Cæsarea Philippi; since, the last time any notice of his journeys was made, he was in the borders of that place (xvi. 13), and the next place he is recorded to have visited, was Capernaum (xvii. 24). According to Dr Carpenter's calculation, the transfiguration took place on the 25th of March, on the second sabbath night before the crucifixion.

The parallel accounts of the transfiguration are found in Mark ix. 2—13 and Luke ix. 28—36.

1. *And after six days*: i. e. six days after Peter had declared his belief in the Messiahship of Jesus near Cæsarea Philippi (xvi. 13 and following). Mark gives the same number of days; but Luke (ix. 28) says *about eight days*. This seeming discrepancy may be accounted for in two ways: either Luke may not have intended to state the time with particular exactness,—and the use of the qualifying word *about*, favors this supposition,—or he availed himself of a manner of reckoning common among the Jews, viz. that of enumerating the days when two events took place when they were only to speak of the time between two events. An obvious instance of this form of speech occurs when Jesus is said to have been three days in the earth, when he was buried Friday night and rose Sunday morning, having been in the tomb *a part of each of the three days*. Thus, if either interpretation be the true one, there is no real disagreement between the two evangelists.



*Peter, James and John.* These were the most eminent of the disciples, and appear to have enjoyed a greater degree of intimacy with Jesus than was accorded to the others. They alone were witnesses of his agony in the garden (xxvi. 27).

*A high mountain.* This was one of the mountains of Galilee, but which, is uncertain. Some suppose it was Mount Tabor; but this is not probable, since Tabor is in the southern part of Galilee, and Christ was now near Cesarea Philippi in the northern part of Upper Galilee. We are then to look for the mountain in this vicinity. Cesarea is built at the foot of Mount Paneas, the highest mountain in this part of Galilee, which was probably the scene of the transfiguration.

Luke says they went up to pray, though the other writers do not mention the object of his visiting the place. We know it was his custom to retire at night for this purpose.

2. *Was changed in appearance.\** It was thought best to adopt this expression, as better conveying the sense of the original than the word transfigured. Rosenmuller renders it '*and his form was changed.*' Jerome well remarks we are not to understand that Christ lost his original form and features, or that his body was changed substantially, for the language employed only declares that a remarkable splendor, a singular majesty appeared in his countenance, which perhaps could not be described in words. This transfiguration, perhaps, affords a fulfilment of the prediction in chapter xvi. 28 — 'There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom,' though others suppose that related to another event.†

3. *Moses and Elias.* Christ was now going up to Jerusalem to be put to a painful and ignominious death, as he had already declared to his disciples (xvi. 21). The terrors of his situation were evident to his mind, and what wonder if he

\* See the valuable article upon the transfiguration in Vol. v. No. 2, page 74 of this work.

† See the first article in the last number of this work, page 201.

needed consolation? It was the hour of midnight, and his heart was moved by prayer. Is it too much to suppose that his agony was equal to that in the garden of Gethsemane on the night of his betrayal? And if an angel appeared to comfort him on this trying occasion, does he need it less now? And who more proper to afford this consolation — to increase his fortitude and hope — than the founder of the Hebrew nation — the mighty Moses, and the most remarkable of the ancient prophets, who had themselves to contend with a froward people? This consideration is confirmed by the declaration of Luke that the visitants ‘spake of his decease which he should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem.’

Schetgen and Lightfoot have shown by citations from the rabbinical writers, that many of the Jews expected Moses and Elias to appear at the coming of Christ. Probably they were led to form this expectation from the opinions entertained by the Jews,\* that Moses never died, but was conveyed to heaven in an extraordinary manner, and from the common notion that Elijah was miraculously carried from the earth : See 2 Kings, ii. 2.

Paulus, a German rationalist, thinks the persons who appeared to Jesus upon the mount were not *Moses and Elias*, but the disciples called them by these names, supposing with their countrymen that these distinguished men were to appear in the time of Christ.

4. *Peter said let us make, &c.* Rosenmuller supposes this to have been said when they were departing from the mountain, and had reached a pleasant place, full of materials for constructing a tent (or booth), where Peter thought it well to remain apart from the cares of life, and enjoy the company of the distinguished visitants they had seen. Others think they wished to provide for them as assistants and ministers of Christ, still supposing he would establish a temporal kingdom.

5. *A cloud of light.* This version accords with Gries-

\* See Josephus, book iv. chapter viii. section 98.

bach's reading in this place, but the sense is not materially different from the common translation, though more exact.

A luminous cloud is frequently employed in the scriptures, as a symbol of the presence of the Deity. See Ex. xvi. 10; xl. 33; Ezek. xliii. 2; 1 Chron. v. 14; Job xxxvii. 1.

*Surrounded.* If it was a cloud of light, it could not *overshadow* them, as the common version reads.

*A voice out of the cloud, &c.* As some think, thunder, which was regarded as a manifestation of the Divine presence. The disciples then understood the *thunder* as a declaration that Jesus was the Son of God, in whom God was well pleased. Thunder is called the Voice of God in many places in the Old Testament: Psalms xviii. 14; xxix. 3, Revelation vi. 1, and xi. 19.

Inanimate things are said to declare the glory of God: Ps. xix. 2—4. Others suppose the words *a voice out of a cloud*, mean articulate sounds, conveying this sentiment in human language. But which is the true interpretation every one must decide for himself.

*Hear ye him.* Obey his commands; listen to him.

The apostles, it is supposed, considered the thunder or voice under these peculiar circumstances a proof of the miraculousness of Jesus' mission, and this comprised the duty of listening to and obeying him.

6. *They fell upon their faces.* Dazzled by the light, and astonished by the thunder or voice, they fell involuntarily upon the earth, awed by the stupendousness of the scene. See Leviticus ix. 24. Perhaps they feared they should die if they looked up. See Exodus xxiii. 20; Judges vi. 22; Exodus iii. 6; Daniel viii. 17; Acts ix. 24. Luke says that Moses and Elias had withdrawn before the cloud of light appeared.

9. *Tell this—to no man, &c.* See xvi. 20, where the disciples were directed not to proclaim that he was the Messiah, because the time for his full manifestation was not yet come.

The crucifixion and resurrection placed his Messiahship in the clearest light.

They had seen a glimpse of his glory, and it was to be feared that dangerous consequences would follow had the disciples, with their imperfect knowledge of Christ's designs, been permitted to disclose all that they had seen.

Insurrection would have probably taken place among the people; they would have come to take him by force to make him a king.

Full evidence of his Messiahship was now afforded the disciples, and they needed some restraint upon their spirits to keep them within the bounds of duty. For this reason, Christ forbids them to proclaim it until after his death and resurrection.

10. *And his disciples asked him, &c.* This verse may be understood in two ways. We may suppose the disciples to ask, 'Why should we not proclaim it immediately to all the world, since the scribes declare that Elias was to come before the Messiah? We have seen him, and now the only argument against your Messiahship is removed by his appearance.' Or we may understand them to ask, 'Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' without referring to his prohibition.

Christ replies without alluding to what had occurred on the mountain, and shows them that such an Elias as the scribes expected was not to appear; but that John the Baptist was his precursor—a man similar to Elijah in many respects.

11. *Elias truly shall first come, &c.* The sense is, Elijah was first to have come, &c. to have restored all things.

The Jews in the time of Christ understood Malachi iii. 13, 14 to relate to Elijah the Tishbite, who was to make his appearance in the times of the Messiah. Many of the later Jews say he is still alive, and will come upon the earth again when Gog and Magog appear.

12. *Elias is already come.* John the Baptist came 'in

the spirit and power of Elias' (Luke i. 17), preached repentance, and dwelt much in the wilderness. See 1 Kings xvii.

*Did not receive him.* Did not acknowledge as a divine messenger, but treated him with all kinds of malignity.

THEO. PARKER.

## THE BOOK OF JOB.

[Concluded from page 240.]

THE raven and his young cry unto God, 'when they wander for lack of food.

The ostrich, horse and eagle are among the noblest of the animals of God. The poet seems to see the exulting bird uplifting his great pinions, as he says —

'The joyful wing of the exulting :  
Is it the ostrich's plume ?  
She leaves her eggs to the earth,  
To be warmed in the dust.  
When she raises herself on high,  
She laughs at the horse and his rider.'—xxxix. 16—18, 21.

We almost hear the laughing of the silly bird, as she leaves horse and rider behind her, in her rapid flight.

The horse and the eagle have been so beautifully painted :

'Hast thou given the horse strength ?  
Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder ?  
Hast thou made him leap like a grasshopper ?  
The breath of his nostrils is terrible !  
He paws in the valley ;  
He rejoiceth in strength,  
And rusheth to the meeting of arms.



He mocks at fear, and is not awed.  
He turns not back from the edge of the sword.  
The quiver sounds upon him ;  
The glittering of spear and lance.  
With anger and rage he beats the ground,  
Nor stops at the sound of the trumpet.  
At the voice of the trumpet he says ' aha !'  
He scents the battle from afar,  
The thunder of the chiefs and the shouting.

Will the eagle mount up at thy command,  
And build her nest on high ?  
She dwells upon the rock,  
On the crag and summit of the rock she passes the night.  
Thence she looks forth for food ;  
Her eyes look out afar.'—xl. 22—32.

Behemoth and Leviathan must be omitted in our hasty notice.

Though the inanimate and animal creation is so finely depicted, man is not neglected. No ; ' the inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding,' and he is represented as a king in the universe ; his power is only mean when compared with Omnipotence. Man's nobleness is not expressly dwelt upon, but his excellency is implied by his ability to understand the beauty and magnificence of the other works of creation. Man alone of all God's works has wisdom ; and this throughout the poem is highly extolled.

The language of Job is always superior to that of his friends—his knowledge of nature and of man more extensive and accurate. His figures are always more majestic and bold. He thinks like a philosopher, and speaks like a poet.

But when the Deity speaks, the land, the sea and the sky send their majestic delegates to crowd the picture

that swells upon the sight. The style has then a beauty which has never been surpassed.

A high standard of morality is always kept up throughout the book. Vice is always contemptible and hateful to God, while virtue is always pleasing in his sight. Job affords a striking picture of a great and good man 'cast down' by adversity, 'but not destroyed.' His anger is sometimes a little aroused by the remarks of his friends, and he is too confident in his attempts to justify himself. But this was perhaps necessary to show he was a man; at least, without these marks of human frailty, we complain that the character was unnatural.

Of all the Old Testament characters, he is perhaps the most virtuous and amiable. He is not perfect; but there has been but one, 'tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'

Job does not believe in the immortality of the soul. This repeatedly appears. e. g.

'As the cloud fails, and vanishes away,  
So he who goes down to the grave shall not return.'—vii. 9.  
'There is hope of a tree cut down,  
That it will grow green again,  
And not cease its new shoots.  
But man dies and wastes away!  
He expires, and where is he?'—xiv. 9, 10.

Many other passages can easily be found of the same import.

Chap. xix. 25 and following, is a passage apparently of a very different import, at least as it stands in our version. But if the following is, as it is believed, a correct translation, the passage contains nothing inconsistent with the opinion of man's mortality Job had previously expressed,

but which the rather shows his faith in his own integrity and the justice of God.

‘I know that my avenger lives,  
And soon will stand upon the earth.  
Even after [diseases] have consumed this skin,  
In my flesh shall I see God,  
Whom I shall see myself.  
Mine own eyes shall see, and not another.’

No allusion is here made to the resurrection from the dead. Job believes that God knows his integrity, and the falsity of his friends’ accusations, and expects he will make a personal appearance to establish the innocent, and confute the charges of his opposers.

The sequel shows that he was right. God does speak from a cloud. It is only justice to observe that most critics render this passage in a different manner.

The religion of the poem is pure — the worship of one God — the service of the heart, and not of the lips.

The hypocrite is always condemned.

The Deity is spoken of as the cause of all things ; he hath given liberally and upbraideth not.

The duty of submission to his will, and obedience to the dictates of his law innate in the heart, is often insisted upon or implied.

How noble does this poem appear, when compared with any of the poems of heathen nations, or of that of any later age? Compare this with any of the justly prized relics of Grecian poetry, and how degraded are they by the contrast! The Jews were children in the arts, but giants in religion.

## VI. HISTORY OF THE BOOK.

Some suppose the book was brought among the Jews in the time of Hezekiah, but the deepest obscurity rests upon this as well as upon its author.

It is probable the book had a place in the Jewish canon at the time of the return from captivity.

Allusion is thought to be made to the book in several places in the New Testament, which, however, do little to support its genuineness.

It did not always occupy the same place in the canon as at present. Some writers have placed it after Canticles; others after Ezekiel; and others at the end of the Old Testament.

[Many of the ideas developed and opinions expressed in the foregoing article may be found in the commentaries of ancient and modern German writers.]

THEO. PARKER.

#### MISTRANSLATIONS IN THE COMMON VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

##### GOSPEL OF JOHN.

John i. 21. *What then?* Properly, *Who then?* as Campbell; or, *What art thou then?* Wakefield. Whitby supplies (in his paraphrase) — *art thou?* It is well said, that the phrase chosen by our translators has an idiomatical acceptance, than which nothing can be further from the purpose, viz. — What would you infer from that?

*Art thou that prophet?* 'This seems to be but a repetition of the same question respecting Elias;' Prof. Symonds. To make it intelligible, as he adds, we must either render, *a prophet*, or *the prophet* (or *teacher*). Castalio, Newcome, A. Clarke, Wiclif and Tyndal render in the former way. So too Lightfoot and Doddridge, with the meaning, — a prophet of a former generation raised from the dead. Campbell and Wakefield give the latter version, in reference, says Campbell, to the popular and general expectation of some great prophet beside Elijah, who was soon to appear, and who was well known by this simple, emphatical appellation.

i. 35. *John stood.* Rather, simply, *John was there*; as Wakefield, Symonds, Castalio, and the version of Mons. Campbell, to the same purpose. We can hardly suppose, says Prof. Symonds, that the Evangelist meant to describe the posture of the Baptist. See note on Mark xi. 25.

i. 40. *Which heard John speak, and followed him.* 'There is no other than John to whom *him* can have reference; and yet, from verse 39, it appears that it was not John, but Jesus whom the two disciples followed;' Prof. Symonds. He quotes Diodati, Castalio and Tyndal, as alike free from any ambiguity. The same may be said of the modern English translations.

i. 42. *Which is, by interpretation, a stone.* Rather, *which denoteth the same as Peter*; Campbell. What seems material here is, (as Campbell says), to be assured of the sameness of the person called *Cephas* and *Peter*, rather than to know that they both signify *rock*. The Public Version, which acts upon this rule in verse 41, as to *Messiah* and *Christ*, (rather than explain *Messiah*



by the term *anointed*) violates it here. It thus defeats the very purpose of John, inserting the *Cephas* — he not calling the apostle by that name elsewhere; and the mere English reader, when he afterwards hears of Peter, could not learn from this Evangelist that it was he who is here designated as *Cephas*. Grotius and the Vulgate concur with Campbell. So, too, Wiclif — *thou shalt be clepid* (called) *Cephas, that is to seye, Petre*.

ii. 2. *And both Jesus was called, &c.* Rather, *Jesus and his disciples also were invited, &c.*; Symonds, Newcome and Campbell.

ii. 3. *And when they wanted wine.* Prof. Symonds asks, ‘Does not this indicate that Jesus and his disciples wanted wine?’ I have met with this ambiguity in no other version whatever. Wiclif renders — *And whanne wyn* (when wine) *failed*. In this he has been followed by almost all our translators; and nothing can be more close to the original.

ii. 9. *The ruler of the feast.* Here the same personage is called, almost in the same breath, *ruler* and *governor*; a violation of uniformity, remarked and censured by Newcome and Symonds.

iii. 10. *A master of Israel.* ‘Though the words *master* and *teacher* are often synonymous, yet something very different is implied by a *master of Israel*’ — Prof. Symonds; who translates, *a teacher in Israel*. So Newcome, Castalio, Doddridge, Pearce, and the Genevan Bible have it: *a teacher of Israel*, Wakefield: *the teacher of Israel*, Campbell. Either of these is much better than the present version.

iii. 20. *Should be reproved.* Better, *discovered*, as

Newcome, A. Clarke, Wakefield and Pearce ; or, *detected*, as Campbell.

iii. 33. *Hath set to his seal.* Properly, *confirmeth by his seal*, as it were ; Erasmus, Wakefield and Symonds. Newcome and Pearce in like manner. The Common Version is very harsh. Wiclif does not count even the mention of a seal necessary — *hath conferred that God is soithfast*. Neither does Campbell — *voucheth the veracity of God*.

iv. 1. *When\* the Lord knew\*\* that Jesus made.* 'This seems to be one of the strangest renderings in the New Testament, for the words *the Lord knew*, must be thought to mean that "God knew." This is far from the scope of the sacred writer.' Prof. Symonds ; who quotes more than one foreign version as giving the passage with perfect propriety. Wiclif avoids the ambiguity, but it is by rendering *Jesus* in both clauses, which is somewhat harsh. The pronoun *he* in the second instance is the change most called for. Modern translators generally observe this.

iv. 27. *With the woman.* Doubtless it should be, *with a woman* ; as Wakefield and Campbell ; without which, the contemptuous opinion of intercourse with females, (the cause of surprise,) faintly appears.

iv. 54. *This is again the second miracle, &c.* 'That is,' says Prof. Symonds, 'in plain English, the second miracle was wrought twice.' He translates the adverb (*again*) — *Moreover, this is, &c.* Newcome drops it wholly, as an expletive ; but most translators connect it with the participle (*come out*) ; to wit, *after returning*, or *on his return, &c.* So Pearce, Adam Clarke, Wakefield and Campbell.

v. 2. *By the sheep-market.* But *sheep-gate* is almost universally preferred by translators. 'There is good evidence that one of the gates of Jerusalem was so called; none, that any place was called the sheep market.' See Nehem. iii. 1, 32. Campbell.

v. 14. *Jesus findeth \*\* and said.* 'Both verbs should undoubtedly be either in past or in present time. Most of our old translators had too much judgment to render the Greek literally; as Wiclif and Taverner. So, too, Castalio.' Prof. Symonds.

v. 39. *Search the Scriptures.* Most probably, *Ye search the Scriptures*; as translators generally. 'Ye act thus from a fixed persuasion;' as Campbell observes. Take the words as a command, and the argument fails.

vi. 7. *Two hundred pennyworth.* Rather, *denarii*; as Newcome and Campbell. Great mistakes are produced by negligent rendering of the terms of currency, as also of measure or weight. The *denarius* was equal to more than *seven pence* of our money.

vi. 22. *On the other side of the sea.* Why our translators render *on the other side*, it is hard to say. 'They were not on "the other side;" i. e. not in Peræa as it was called;' Pearce. Almost all translators render, *on or by the sea-side*.

vi. 57. *As the living Father hath sent me.* Much better, *As the Father liveth, who sent me, and I live, &c.*; Campbell: and in the same way, Grotius, Castalio and Wakefield.

vi. 70. *Is a devil.* Properly, *a false accuser*; as Newcome, Pearce and Wakefield: or *a spy*, as Campbell. Our translators have, in several other instances, as well as this, given to the Greek word here used a

version seemingly without any appositeness, from disregarding its generic and primary sense.

vii. 22. *Moses therefore gave, &c.* The adverb (*therefore*) which stands here, as several critics remark, most incongruously, is by common consent transferred to verse 21, where it has fitness and force; — *Ye all marvel therefore*, i. e. on account of the miracle. So Doddridge, Wesley, Wynne, Adam Clarke, Worsley, Pearce, &c.

vii. 28. *Ye both know me, and ye know, &c.* Properly, *Do ye both know who and whence I am?* Campbell; and so translators generally. It is well observed that the Public Version directly contradicts our Saviour's words, (comp. ch. viii. 14, 19) and what indeed in the next breath he affirmed; for not to know *who sent him*, was tantamount to not knowing 'whence he came.'

vii. 45. *And they said unto them.* Another of those petty examples noticed by the accurate Symonds of the loose grammar of our translators; — *who said unto them.* The Zurich Version, Castalio and Beausobre have kept clear of this mistake; our modern translators, of course.

viii. 26. *To judge of you.* It should be *to condemn in you*; Symonds, Newcome, A. Clarke, Wakefield.

viii. 44. *He speaketh of his own.* This is by no means clear. Rather, *suitably to his character*; Campbell, Wakefield and A. Clarke express a similar sense.

viii. 58. *I am.* To enter into any discussion as to the doctrinal bearing of this passage, is foreign to my plan. It is cited only as an example of faulty translation; and it may be referred pre-eminently to that class of which *prejudice* is the source. Wakefield, with many other critics, renders, 'I am *he*,' i. e. the Messiah; the

true version doubtless, and the same which our translators have given to this very expression in the original, repeatedly elsewhere. See John iv. 26, xiii. 19, xviii. 5, 6, 8, verses 24, 23 of this chapter. So, too, Acts xiii. 25. Here then is another and very striking proof of their neglect of uniformity.

ix. 24. *That was blind.* Evidently this should be past time — *who had been blind.* So it is, says Prof. Symonds, in almost all the Latin versions, as well as the Geneva Bible.

xi. 49. *Ye know nothing at all.* But, as has been well said, it is most clear from the whole scope of the passage, that it is not with ignorance in any point of view that Caiaphas reproaches them. It is their want of political wisdom. *Ye are utterly at a loss, and do not consider that it is better, &c.,* says Campbell, and to the same effect other translators.

xi. 56. *What think ye, that he will not come, &c.* What was the purpose of this question in its present form, it is not easy to say. But our translators have doubtless merged in one, two distinct questions. Campbell, with most versions, so decides; as thus — *What think ye? Will he not come to this festival?*

xii. 24. *It abideth alone.* Rather, *it remaineth a single grain;* as Wakefield, Symonds, and other translators. What meaning King James's translators intended to give, is wholly conjectural.

xii. 27. *Father, save me from this hour.* Interpreters, with general consent, count this verse to need some sort of amendment. Adam Clarke says, 'the Common Version makes our blessed Lord contradict himself.' He therefore renders — *And how should I say, Father, &c.,*



*when for this cause I am come to this hour?* So, with trivial variation, Wakefield. Newcome, Campbell and Doddridge simply give an interrogative form to the clause before us — (i. e. shall I say) *Father, save me from this hour?*

xii. 49. *What I should say, and what I should speak.* This is one of the most unfortunate specimens of our Public Version. The common reader no doubt wonders why such emphatic distinction should be made between two clauses, in which there is, for aught he can see, no conceivable difference of meaning. That distinction is shown by all judicious translators; as Campbell — *What I should enjoin, and what I should teach.* The first clause implied the *preceptive* part of his religion, and the last, the *doctrinal*.

xiii. 2. *And supper being ended.* Critics, however, with almost common consent, decide that so far from this, supper was not even begun; nor does the Greek require such a rendering. Castalio, Pearce and Adam Clarke give it — *while supper was preparing*; Doddridge, Wakefield and Newcome — *supper or supper-time being come.* Campbell translates — *while they were at supper.*

xiii. 7. *Hereafter.* — Better, *presently*, i. e. when I have done; Newcome. To the same effect, Pearce, Doddridge and A. Clark. *Hereafter* gives the idea of a distant time, or the future life.

xiii. 33. *A little while I am with you.* Rather, *but a little time longer shall I be with you*; Wakefield, Symonds and Newcome.

xiv. 1. *Ye believe in God, &c.* But these words are given in the imperative form by Luther, in which he has been followed by translators, with few exceptions, since; — *Put your trust in God; put your trust also in me.*

xiv. 12. *Because I go unto my Father.* The disjoining this verse from verse 13 by a period effaces the connexion of the whole passage. Our Saviour's 'going to the Father,' does not by itself assure what he is promising; but does so, when his agency in this exalted state is taken into account. Look now at Wakefield and Campbell — *because I am going to my Father, and whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do.*

xiv. 16. *Comforter.* The Greek word, it is allowed by critics, admits of three significations, of which that in the Public Version is one. Campbell prefers *Monitor*. But the majority of translators render, *Advocate*. So Le Clerc. Thus, too, verse 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7.

xiv. 18. *Comfortless.* Properly, *orphans*; as Doddridge, Wakefield and Campbell. So Wiclif — *faderless* (fatherless). Newcome, in effect the same — *destitute*.

xiv. 30. *Hath nothing in me.* This is obscure. *Shall find nothing in me*; Campbell and Pearce. Wakefield connects verses 30 and 31 — *and I have nothing now to do but to convince the world that I love the Father, &c.*

xiv. 31. *But that the world may know, &c.* This is now a defective and faulty sentence. Newcome and Campbell obviate it — '*But this must be that the world,*' &c. Markland gives a new punctuation — *But that the world may know\*\* even so I do, arise, let us go home.* See note on verse 30, for Wakefield's amendment.

xv. 2. *He purgeth it.* Doubtless this should be *pruneth it*, i. e. cleanseth by pruning; and so translators generally.

xv. 6. *Men gather them \* cast them \* they are burned.* Ungrammatical. 'One would be tempted to think

that our translators considered *branch* as a noun multitude, which might have in agreement either a singular or plural pronoun;’ Prof. Symonds. Had they rendered — *and men gather such*, the subsequent plurals would be defensible. It is so by most translators. From this blunder, Wiclif, Tyndal and the Rhemish Version have kept clear.

xv. 11. *My joy might remain in you.* The feebleness and obscurity of this clause are removed wholly by transposing the last two words, thus — *that my joy in you might continue, or remain*; as Pearce, A. Clarke, Newcome, &c. Campbell is yet more clear — *that I may continue to have joy in you.*

xv. 20. *If they have kept my saying.* This is probably wrong. The Greek verb admits, and as the most eminent critics judge, requires here a bad import. *If they have watched my sayings*, i. e. maliciously. So Gataker, Knatchbull, Pearce.

xv. 24. *Have they both seen and hated, &c.* Properly, *have seen them, and yet hated me and my Father*; Campbell. Wakefield, more plainly — *Though they have seen these works, they hate, &c.* The repetition also of *both* in the Public Version, is very clumsy.

xvi. 2. *Doeth God service.* This expression, it is observed, much too faintly conveys the force of the Greek, which imports — *offereth sacrifice to God*; Erasmus, Castalio, Beza and the Zurich Version. The excellent Leighton, with English critics generally, takes the same view.

xvi. 25. *Proverbs.* This word is wanting in force. *Parables* is much preferable. Thus, Doddridge, Pearce and Adam Clarke. ‘The Genevan Bible in like man-

ner; but our translators chose rather to thrust this interpretation into the margin than to admit it into the text;’ Prof. Symonds. Wakefield renders — *in dark speeches*: Castalio — *in figurative discourse*.

*Show you plainly of the Father.* Better, *Instruct you plainly concerning the Father*; as Campbell and other translators.

xvii. 3. *Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* The proposition intended to be set forth, is hidden by this version. *And Jesus, thy messenger, to be the Christ*; Wakefield. Pearce, in like manner.

xvii. 13. *That they might have my joy fulfilled, &c.* Campbell says, ‘What meaning our translators affixed to these words, he cannot say; but the whole scope and connexion make it evident that “my joy” denotes here not the joy which I have, but the joy whereof I am the object; that is, the joy they will derive from me.’ He translates — *that their joy in me may be complete*. Thus, too, Beausobre and Wakefield. Pearce and Newcome however give it — ‘that they may have my joy on their account completed in them.’

xviii. 25. *They said therefore unto him.* ‘The poor particle “therefore” was never more miserably abused than in this verse. We should substitute *then* for *therefore*, as Coverdale and Cranmer have done; or regard the Greek as a conjunction, after the manner of some of our old versions — “and they said unto him;”’ Prof. Symonds. See note on Luke xx. 29.

xix. 40. *As the manner of the Jews is to bury.* Properly, *as is the Jewish manner of embalming*; Wakefield, Newcome and Campbell.

xx. 6. *Then cometh Simon Peter\*\* and went\*\* and seeth.* 'Here is a perfect tense slipped in between two present tenses, after a very extraordinary manner. Thus it is indeed in the original; but will any contend that it makes good English, because it makes good Greek? Either it should be "goeth into the sepulchre," or the three verbs should be in the past time, as in the Vulgate, (venit, introivit, vidit,) and in fact, in our ancient translations, and in the French, Spanish and Italian Versions;' Prof. Symonds

xx. 19. *The disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews.* The bad printing of the Public Version wholly disguises the sense, and seems to intimate that the assembling was from fear of the Jews; a step more certain to expose them to danger than any other. All this ambiguity is by a slight change removed, in Wakefield — *the doors, where the disciples were assembled, being shut for fear of the Jews.* Castalio, Newcome and Campbell take the same method.

J. P. DABNEY.

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#### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

To the Christian, the fact that Christ rose from the dead, must always be one of immense interest. Built upon this foundation, the evidences of our religion cannot be shaken. Yea, let the fact be fully established, and there is an obstacle in the way of infidelity, which must forever hinder its progress. "By this we know"



that Christianity came from God. Whatever other arguments the unbeliever may evade, he cannot deny that the admission of this fact must prove beyond a doubt, that God did manifestly interfere by miraculous power; and thus that "he who raised up the Lord Jesus," did also establish through him the kingdom which was not of this world. "Every particle of the German Infidelity must be scattered to the winds, when it is proved that Jesus rose from the dead."\* And unbelief has seen and owned the importance of this fact. And therefore it is, that so many attempts have been made to weaken its evidence. But the Resurrection of Christ has interest for us, not only as furnishing new and impregnable strength to the grounds of our faith, but for the stamp of *completion*, which is hereby set upon our Saviour's ministry. Without this, where would have been the fulfilment of his prophecies? What mystery would have covered those words which speak of "rising the third day?" And where too would have been that "full assurance of faith," which carried on the disciples triumphantly through so many trials? If he whom they had seen crucified and slain, had not also shown himself to them after his passion, by many infallible proofs" (Acts i. 3.) they must then indeed have ceased to trust "that it had been he, who should have redeemed Israel." By this, he was "declared to be the Son of God with power" (Rom. i. 4.)—"death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom. vi. 9.), and "to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living," (Rom. xiv. 9.). Further, the Saviour's Resur-

rection is not only to be regarded as the crowning event of his mission, but deserves attention for its close connexion with man's immortality and the coming judgment, "whereof God hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead," (Acts. xvii. 31.) "If Christ be not raised, then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Passages of this sort, which speak of Christ's resurrection as the ground of man's confidence in his own, are frequent in the Epistles, as, e. g. Rom. vi. 5—viii. 11.; 1 Cor. xv. 13, 21; 2 Cor. iv. 14; 1 Thess. iv. 14; 1 Peter i. 3. And we find, from notices of the Apostles' preaching in the book of Acts, that this great event was a most frequent theme of their discourse, standing out in the prominence which belongs to an essential fact of Christianity. Such being its claims, it behoves every one, who would show that his "faith is *not* vain," to examine into their grounds. And this is the inquiry here proposed, viz: the evidence of the fact, and its exposition.

Of course we are to look for particulars and proof mainly to the Gospel narratives. There we find four circumstantial accounts of this great event, agreeing in some points, and in some differing from each other. That there is *some* discrepancy, cannot fail to have struck the most cursory reader. The unbeliever urges that it is so great as to weaken, if not destroy, all proof of the fact. I trust it will be here shown that the truth is precisely the reverse; that what difference exists among the Evangelists, goes rather to establish their testimony, than to set it aside. In order to this, it will be necessary, in some measure, to consider the nature and objects of the

Gospel histories, and the character of their writers ; not whether they were *in general* trustworthy and accurate, but what especial reason there is to give ear to them *now*, in the case before us.

Now Matthew and John, we know, profess, as apostles, to have seen our Saviour alive on the very day of his resurrection, and none will deny that it was at least their honest opinion, that he had actual'y risen from the dead. Their competency to give a true account will seem not improbable too, (apart even from the contents of their writings,) when we reflect that their narratives were not hastily put together at the excitement of the moment,\* but (as is believed from ancient testimony) many years afterwards, when their cool judgment would certainly have rejected what had not borne the strict scrutiny of time. Concerning Mark and Luke, it has been a question whether they were eye-witnesses of the events connected with the Resurrection. Mark, at any rate, was an early believer and a companion of Peter, and therefore able to give an independent and authentic history of the event. And it is highly probable that Luke was one of the two disciples whom he mentions as meeting Christ on their way to Emmaus. Such being the situation of the writers, what was their design in giving a narrative of the Resurrection? Certainly not to communicate

\* By this is meant that the *entire* Gospels were not composed immediately after the Resurrection. We shall afterwards see, perhaps, that it is highly probable these Evangelists preserved some memorandum of the great event, written at the time, and afterwards deliberately inserted as correct ; or else that the particulars of it, as received at the time, were firmly printed on their memories, by frequent repetition to others.

every particular connected with it ; and to give a complete history of whatsoever happened on that memorable day. They simply relate the facts in the way in which they were made known to them, whether by eye-witness, or from the report of others. By this rule therefore, they ought to be judged. And so the omission of one evangelist to record what another has written, is not to be accounted a discrepancy. Had they all drawn their information from the same source, then indeed we might confidently say, that all had not copied with the same accuracy, and that all, consequently, were not equally credible. It becomes then, interesting and important to know, what were the sources whence each evangelist wrote. This will account for the peculiarities of each, and the reason of their variations from each other.

It has been before said that Matthew and John were in part eye-witnesses of what they relate. And this would occasion a variety in their representations, proportioned to the different circumstances under which they were placed. Moreover these disciples received the first intelligence of the event from the women of the company. Mary Magdalene told Peter and John what she had seen, (John xx. 2,) but the other apostles received their information from the other women (Matt. xxviii. 8—10.) Now as we shall see that Mary Magdalene was separated from the others in some of the scenes which she witnessed, Matthew and John may each have given faithful reports from the women, and still have differed from each other. To Luke, *Joanna* probably related some circumstances not mentioned by the other evangelists ; for he alone introduces her name (ch. xxiv. 10. See also ch. viii. 3.) And he too, either as himself

one of the two who went to Emmaus, or at least, as acquainted with them, drew from another source, which the two apostles seem not to have had. As Mark alone mentions Salome as one of the women, (ch. xv. 40—xvi. 1,) it seems not improbable that he wrote from her testimony. It appears too, from Acts xii. 12, that he must have been acquainted with the disciples, who frequented his mother's house, and therefore able to derive from them authentic information.

If now, this view be thought in any wise probable, it would be quite superfluous to show, how entirely natural it is, that the evangelists should disagree with each other in some few particulars, without affecting their general credibility. The main fact in the history, was what chiefly concerned them. Of course, then, they would not at first be anxious to inquire whether the several reports of their company agreed in all points. Not one of them had denied that Christ had risen from the dead, but all unanimously affirmed the stupendous miracle. Doubtless they afterwards, when the immediate excitement had passed, compared their accounts, and found some few disagreements, i. e. omissions or additions; yet still preferred to set down in writing that account (incomplete as it was), which had first made known to them an event of such overwhelming interest. "The evangelist John," says Griesbach, "felt himself bound in conscience, neither to add to, nor take from, the words of Magdalene."\* And we may suppose the other evan-

\* See his "Opuscula Academica," vol. ii, wherein is contained a treatise on the subject of the Resurrection, to which this is largely indebted.



gelists had the like religious reverence for the sources of their information.

Let us now see what helps we derive from the considerations here presented, for filling out and explaining the Evangelical History. What marks of truth are impressed on the *contents* of the narratives; and how may we supply from the one the deficiencies of the other? Are there any real contradictions to be found there, or is the utmost that can be charged against them, a charge of incompleteness? An answer to these questions will be furnished by making a "harmony" of the four accounts; to which I now proceed, not confining myself to the words of the evangelists, which would be impracticable to the full explanation of their agreement.\*

It is mentioned by two of the evangelists (Mark and Luke), that after certain women from Galilee had beheld where the body of Jesus was laid, they prepared spices and ointments to anoint him, and then "rested on the Sabbath day according to the commandment." (The names of these women, as far as they are given, were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, Joanna, and Salome.) They were evidently without any expectation of the wonderful event which was so soon to take place, and had merely "bought sweet spices" to pay the last tokens of respect to a beloved master. Accordingly when the Sabbath was past, two of their number, (the two Marys, with perhaps Salome,) set out very early in the morning, while it was yet dark, "to see the

\* I follow West chiefly in this arrangement, with whom, for the most part, agrees Hess, in his "History of the Life of Jesus," (in German,) a work well worthy of being translated.

sepulchre;" probably wishing to ascertain whether all was in readiness for the embalming. Meanwhile "there had been a great earthquake." An angel had "descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightening, and his raiment white as snow." Terrified at this sight, the guard, which had been set there by the chief priests and Pharisees, flee, while the angel probably entered the sepulchre. The two Marys and Salome during this time have come near the tomb, which they reach about sunrise (Mark xvi. 2.) As they approach it occurs to them that there will be a difficulty in entering the tomb, on account of the large stone with which they had before seen the entrance closed (Matt. xxvii. 60, 61—Mark xv. 46, 47.) They say, therefore, among themselves, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" But behold! as they draw near, they perceive that the obstacle is already removed; and knowing nothing of the angel's interposition, they conclude some enemy had rolled away the stone, and removed the body of Jesus. Without waiting to confirm this conclusion, Mary Magdalene immediately runs to acquaint Peter and John of it; probably wishing their aid in finding the body, which she asserts had been taken away. While she was gone on this errand, the other Mary and Salome, who remained behind, entered into the sepulchre, and beheld "a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen

from the dead ; and behold he goeth before you into Galilee ; there shall ye see him as he said unto you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word, neither said they anything to any man" on their way.

After the departure of these women, Peter and John, who had now been told by Mary Magdalene that the body was removed, came running to the sepulchre. John coming up first, merely looks into the cave, and sees there the linen clothes which had been wrapped about the body of Jesus. But Peter following after, with more boldness, enters the tomb, "and sees the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head, not laying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." Encouraged by Peter's example, John also goes inside the sepulchre ; and now, for the first time, the truth breaks in upon him. "He saw" the grave-clothes arranged as Peter had told him, "and believed" that Christ was indeed risen ! The regular disposal of the clothes convinced him that no enemy could have stolen the body. And it seemed equally strange to him, that any friend should have left these behind in the removal of it. He is compelled, therefore, to suppose that Christ himself had put off these garments ; and is confirmed in this, perhaps, by recollecting the predictions of Jesus. And now too he sees the force of the Scripture teachings on this subject ; which he says none of them had hitherto understood. Probably his "belief" did not amount to a full persuasion ; for we do not find that he made known his opinion to Peter or to Mary Magdalene. But writing afterwards concerning his visit to the tomb at that time, he simply declares that he then first had a

glimpse of that truth, which was, soon after, clearly made known to him.

Meanwhile Mary Magdalene, who had called the two disciples, comes back again to the sepulchre, as they are returning homeward. As she stood without, weeping, she stooped down and saw two angels within, "sitting the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They say unto her, woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." When she had thus said, she turned herself round — either designing to go back to the city, or attracted by the sound of some footsteps near — and saw Jesus standing, but knew not that it was he. Her thoughts wholly taken up with the removal of his body, it seems not once to have occurred to her, that he was risen from the dead. As too, her eyes were dimmed with weeping, and as the countenance of the Saviour was probably changed by his painful death, no wonder she did not immediately recognize him. Even after he had addressed her, "Woman, why weepest thou," her blindness is not at once removed. She supposes him to be the gardener — thinking perhaps that no other person was so likely to be there at that time, or because he had put on the gardener's dress\* — and says to him, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away;" i. e. "I will provide for him an honorable and safe burial-place." Jesus then called her by name; and she, wondernig at this, "turned herself" round, looked more directly upon him, and ex-

\* This is Tholuck's explanation.

claims, in recognition, "Rabboni," my Master! Probably this was accompanied with some act of reverence; for Jesus says to her "Touch me not" — Do not now manifest towards me these tokens of respect;\* I am not yet that exalted and glorified being which you take me to be — "I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

It will be remembered that before the arrival of Peter and John at the sepulchre, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had left it, after having "seen a vision of angels." As they were now hastening to tell the disciples what had happened, Jesus met them on their way, (Matt. xxviii. 9,) saying, "All hail!" and gave them directions for the disciples, similar to those which they had already received from the angels.

These three women and the two disciples being now gone, Joanna and the other Galilean women came bringing the spices which they had prepared (Luke xxiv. 1.) As they knew nothing of what had previously happened, they were of course much perplexed at finding the stone rolled away, and the body of Jesus gone. While in this perplexity, they are addressed by "two men in shining garments," who declare to them that Christ had risen, according to his prediction. They then return from the sepulchre and "tell these things unto the eleven and unto all the rest. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."† But Peter,

\* This explanation, in which I follow Tholuck, seems to me far preferable to either of the others, which have been given.

† Luke adds, "It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, who told these things unto the disciples." This seems a contradict



who had been before to the sepulchre, when told by Mary Magdalene that the body of Jesus was gone, now runs thither a second time (Luke xxiv. 12,) induced by the report of Joanna, that Christ was risen. With Peter, probably, went some other disciples, (Luke xxiv. 24,) who "found it even so as the women had said;" that is, perhaps, found the clothes in such order, that they were persuaded (as John had been before) that Christ was indeed risen.

The next recorded appearance of our Saviour is, that to the two disciples who went that same day to Emmaus (a village about seven miles and a half north-west from Jerusalem), where it is probable they lived. As they were discoursing together of what had happened, "Jesus himself drew near and went with them." But they knew him not; because, perhaps, they were not so intimately acquainted with his person, as were "the twelve;" or because he appeared to them "in another form," (i. e. in a different dress from that which he had

the arrangement here followed, which supposes the two Marys not to have been with Joanna when she saw "these things." And it must be allowed difficult to reconcile this statement of Luke with the words of the other evangelists. Yet no candid reader, I suppose, will consider Luke's credit weakened by the difficulty we may here have in filling out the arrangement. Griesbach thinks that Joanna (from whom Luke derived his account) did not think it necessary to give the names of all the women who were present from beginning to end of these scenes; and that Luke, afterwards finding his narrative deficient in this particular, added these names from Matthew's Gospel, forgetting that Matthew did not set out to record events in the same order as himself. As this however, is a mere speculation, it is well to bear in mind that the essential truth of Luke's Gospel by no means depends on the character of this theory.

usually worn, or with his face altered by the circumstances of his death.) While they continue their walk, Jesus rebukes their unbelief, and explains to them the true meaning of what Moses and the prophets had written. Arriving at the village, they persuade him to remain with them. And "as he sat at meat with them," his accustomed manner of breaking and blessing the bread, suddenly opened their eyes to his true character, "and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight." Whereupon they returned to Jerusalem to declare to the rest of the brethren what had taken place, find "the eleven" assembled, and learn of them that Christ had appeared to Peter: they evidently thinking this appearance more important than those which the women had reported; of which they here make no mention — (compare too 1 Corinthians xv. 5—7.) While they were thus communicating to each other these glad tidings, Jesus himself appeared among them. But they, surprized at his sudden entrance, and still doubting that he had indeed risen from the dead, "were affrighted" and supposed him to be a spirit. He calms their fears, and assures them of his bodily presence, by showing them the marks of violence upon his hands, his feet and his side, and by eating before them (Luke xxiv. 37—43.) He then expounds to them whatever was written in the Law, in the Psalms, and the Prophets (i. e. in the Old Testament, generally,) concerning him; promises them "power from on high;" and gives them authority to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Such were the events of that memorable day, as recorded by the evangelists. And it would seem that no

one could read the Gospel narratives without being persuaded that they all give concurrent and overwhelming testimony to the main fact, which they were anxious to communicate. It should be remembered always, that the question, which arrangement is the preferable one, is entirely independent of the question concerning the reality of those facts, which are proposed to be arranged in the true order. One who denies this, must show that the veracity of an author is necessarily impaired, because he does not record every particular connected with his subject. I have not therefore, been anxious to defend the arrangement here followed, though it seems to me better than any other which I have seen. If it offer a consistent reconciliation of the four historians, that will be its best recommendation. I leave the subject with two propositions drawn from the foregoing remarks; which, until they can be gainsayed, establish the history of the Resurrection on sure ground. They are, 1. That no *essential* fact has been omitted by either evangelist in his account. 2. That nothing is asserted by one evangelist, which another expressly denies.

W. SILSBEE.

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VALUE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS.

IN the last number of the Interpreter, the author, date, and general contents of this book were considered; it remains to point out its value as a historical record of our faith. We found that Luke's design in its composi-

tion was to bear witness to the fulfilment of our Saviour's promise in furnishing the means for the extension of his Revelation, and to trace its progress in and about the spot of its first promulgation. This end is answered equally well by the succinct and general history which the book contains, as it would have been by a more prolix and particular account. True, we are left in ignorance about many circumstances where information is desirable, and would have been valuable; but such omissions were rendered absolutely necessary for the sake of brevity. This remark may once for all be made concerning the whole series of compositions in the New Testament. Their authors were preachers, not historians. The early Christians would desire to hear the truths of the Gospel from their own lips, rather than to read them in manuscripts. But as it was important that whatever accounts were committed to writing, should have been sanctioned by the hands of the apostles themselves, it was necessary that while on the one hand, no facts of vital consequence should be omitted, no unreasonable claims should, upon the other, be made on the laborious duties of their authors. Besides the labor of writing, there was the equally difficult task of transcribing, the cost of materials, and still more the desirableness that the records of our faith should be in concise rather than in lengthy documents, all reasons of great weight in justifying brevity. Every needful object is secured if we are made able to gather up even fragments of truth. Certain it is that in the book before us we have abundant means of information on subjects of the greatest importance.

1. In the first place, the value of the book of Acts, results from the knowledge it gives us concerning the

establishment of the early Christian churches — the time, the mode and the places of their foundation, and the principles of their construction and government. It is evident that the life, the labors and the sufferings of our Saviour would have been to no end, if provision were not made for the extension of their knowledge and influence. The choice of his disciples and his command to them to go into all nations and declare his truth, were almost as necessary as his own life and doctrine. When we find them therefore assembled together to await the promised spirit we behold the strengthening growth of that kingdom, which once begun, was never to end. We rejoice at the gradual unfolding of that beautiful design by which the weak things of the world were to be made to confound the things which were mighty; we admire the provision which was designed to empower the instructors of the world, and we adore the simple but sublime manifestation of the Deity which strengthened those eleven timid disciples of the man of sorrows to be faithful even unto death. And now without wealth or influence, or talent, or power, or patronage, unprotected save by the shield of faith, unarmed, save with the sword of the spirit, they commit themselves to the might of the living God, and commence their errand of peace, amid reproach and persecution, and death. And what were the scenes among which they were to utter the words of truth and soberness? It was to the turbulent and haughty Jews, to the atheistic Romans, to the superstitious Athenians, the luxurious Corinthians and the subtle philosophers of Ephesus — to the idolaters of proconsular Asia, to the polytheists of Greece, and to the sensualists of Crete, that the disciples of Jesus were



to make known the unity of God and his righteous government and future judgement of men. In tracing their progress we witness the establishment of eight principal churches, viz. those of Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Smyrna, Athens, Corinth, Rome and Alexandria. There were others, indeed, both in Palestine and throughout the coasts of Asia, but those which we have named, from local circumstances and the consequences of connexion are most worthy of attention. At Jerusalem, as was to have been expected, was the earliest and most numerous Christian society. Here too it was that the controversies founded in Mosaic jealousy, were the most virulent. About A. D. 60, James was appointed the first overseer of this society. After he had been put to death by Herod, Symeon was elected as his successor. It was during his superintendency that the Roman invasion under Titus took place. We are informed by Eusebius\* that previous to this, the church had deserted the place which the prophetic warning of their master had doomed to destruction, and had retired to Pella beyond the Jordan. The probability is, that most of the Christians escaped destruction, though some, from connexions of family, or interest, must have shared in the fearful desolation. This church then became extinct when the sacred hill was covered with ruins. After this the progress of Christianity in the stubborn soil of Palestine, was slow. The neighboring church of Antioch was founded by the Apostles Paul and Barnabas. Here the converts were first designated Christians. Here Christianity made rapid progress. This was the residence of the Prefect

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv. c. 5.

of Syria, by whom the church was protected against the malice of the Jews. From this central point, as the capital of Syria, it is probable that our faith was rapidly propagated, as we read that even before Paul went into Macedonia, he journeyed "through Syria and Cilecia, *confirming* the churches." (Acts xv. 41.) The seven churches of Asia mentioned in Revelations are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus and Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Of these, Ephesus was particularly favored. Credible tradition informs us that St John passed the latter part of his life, and wrote his Gospel in this city; and that when his infirmities would no longer permit him to preside over its assemblies, he always dismissed them with the injunction — "My little children, love one another!" In the Grecian cities of Athens and Corinth, Christianity was established with greater difficulty. Amid the beautiful temples and statues of Paganism, the homely garb of the Gospel appeared like "foolishness." The people were vain, loose and sensual in their morals, subtle and contentious in their philosophy, and exceedingly skeptical in their heathen tenets. At Rome, likewise, the progress of the faith was slow. It was in the secret cellars, in the dark lanes, and the sepulchral vaults of that vast receptacle of splendor and of guilt, that those hymns of which Pliny speaks, were first chaunted in honor of Christ. And when the gathering energy of the feeble sect dared to look forth upon the light of day, the great Roman historian has informed us of their fearful fate. The gardens of the cruel Nero were illumined by their burning bodies. They were torn in pieces by wild beast, were crucified and subjected to the most dreadful

tortures which the fiendish passions of that bad man could inflict. In Alexandria the Gospel was first preached by Mark. Here was a numerous population composed of every nation under heaven, and though we have reason to suppose that the Gospel early lost some of its purity in its reception it early obtained here a successful hearing.

It is interesting to us to know the principles by which these early societies were constructed and governed. Whatever may be the external grounds of expediency in favor of hierarchical establishments, the construction of platforms of discipline and doctrine, and the assignment of official stations and powers in the church, it is certain that neither our Saviour nor his apostles have left any express and positive ordinances for its administration. In the early government of the first church, that of Jerusalem, the whole body of its members was associated with the apostles. The terms Bishop, Overseer, Elder or Presbyter, were used synonymously. The apostles during their life time were the directors of the churches, and at their death, their places were supplied by some distinguished brother. The broad bond of Christian fellowship was that of faith and charity. It was to those who had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, that the apostles proclaimed the promises of the Gospel. So far from seeking the support of the civil power, they were expressly commanded to decide their disputes with one another.\* They were to be like a band of brothers, bound together by the strongest of all ties, as the persecuted disciples of the same Lord, baptized with the same

\* 1 Cor. vi.

baptism, comforted by the same faith, and rejoicing in the same hope of being fellow-heirs with Christ, and companions in eternity. So far from excluding from the participation of Christian privileges and ordinances any who differed even in important points of doctrine, each one was instructed by the very simple admonition of his own ignorance and need of forbearance, to respect the scruples of his brother. The unity and harmony of the Christian churches is one of the *sécondary* causes suggested by Gibbon for the rapid spread of the Gospel. He would account for the wonderful propagation of our faith by arguments independent of its divine origin. He specifies five principal causes, viz. the inflexible and intolerable zeal of the Christians—the doctrine of a future life, strongly supported and improved by them—the miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church—the virtues of the Christians, and their union and discipline\*. Now with regard to each and all of these causes, is it not evident that very much of deep import must have preceded them? Whence came the “zeal” of the Christians? By what arguments did they support “the doctrine of a future life?” Why had “miraculous powers” been ascribed to the primitive church? Whence sprang the “virtues,” “the union and discipline” of the Christians? We cheerfully allow to all these causes the full credit of the effects they produced. They undoubtedly operated—were very effectual; we grant it all; still more, we claim it for them. Paul preached the resurrection, and he spoke to the hearts of men; “he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment

\* Gibbon's Rom. Emp. chap. 15.

to come," and his words found an answer in the conscience. But we think we can go beyond these causes and discover something which produced them; for surely they were neither self-formed, nor self-existent, or why should they have only then begun their operation. Take for instance the virtues of the Christians. These would naturally render their faith attractive and acceptable. But whence did they obtain these virtues, and how came they to be thus distinguished above the rest of the world? Or their zeal, their union. What was the tie which bound them together, but a hope stronger than death, — a sympathy kindled by nothing but a heavenly ray, between the most holy feelings of the soul? As we read the history contained in the Acts, we must admire the beautiful effects of pure religion, and at the same time we must trace the finger of God in this matter. Amid the most superstitious forms of idolatry and polytheism, and the grossest corruptions of sensuality, we mark some little communities of devout men emerging from the surrounding mass of ignorance and vice, and even when their souls had been but partially kindled by the light of truth, perfecting many a precept of the Christian law. We observe as the first united act of the church at Antioch, a message of sympathy and solid charity to their suffering brethren at Jerusalem. And while Paul was confined in bonds at Rome, the new convert Epaphroditus hastens in despite of dangers which threatened his life, to convey to him the grateful offerings of the impoverished Philippians. So long as the churches maintained their original purity, everything resulted happily for them and for their individual members. The book of Acts contains the most valuable and interesting information on all these points to which we have briefly alluded.



2. In the second place the history contained in this book is valuable, as it shows us the influence of Christianity upon those who embraced it. The number and variety of the characters which it presents to us, make it on this point, exceedingly interesting. There were the apostles themselves, who from the timid and wavering companions of Jesus, became the bold and uncompromising preachers of his truth. This is a point of Christian evidence which is very apt to be overlooked. We should endeavor to realise the strength of that faith which impelled these humble peasants to forsake their quiet homes on the shores of Gennesareth and the banks of Jordan, and while the foot prints of their Master, from Jerusalem to the mount of crucifixion, were yet fresh upon the sand, to sacrifice all for his sake. If we would but go back to the days of their persecution and toil, and endeavor to enter into their thoughts, we might well defy all the influence of distrust and skepticism. The identity of characters apparent throughout all the narrations of their lives and actions, is one of the most convincing proofs of their reality. Peter and John are for some time companions in their labors. John is the same faithful but modest brother as he appears in the Gospels. The same confiding love and reverence which brought him to the cross of his dying Master, still embolden him to give his presence even in the council chamber and synagogue. But we do not hear of his making himself conspicuous by words and arguments. It is the impetuous Peter who was ready on all occasions with his sword and his voice, who assumes the bold task of pleading for the truth. The presence of the high-priest and rulers does not in the least dishearten him,

but he declares to them "with all boldness," the solemn truths of his mission. Then there is the whole life of Paul, in itself a body of evidence for the truth of Christianity which all the discrepancies of documents, and the reproaches of persecution, together with the scoffs of the blasphemers and the pitiful arguments of the infidel, can never resist, if thousands of ages should consolidate their influence. He knew in whom he had believed, and though bonds and imprisonment, the lash, the arena and the faggot were before him, he did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. And there too was Stephen, whose zeal burst forth with such a daring energy that but a few short days elapsed from the hour when he embraced the faith, till its brightest visions were realized. There was Philip and Barnabas and Titus and Timothy among the advocates of the faith, who were all faithful witnesses to the truth.

Besides these, there are bright examples among the early Jewish and Gentile converts to the faith. Let it be remembered that those who embraced the Gospel were sure of meeting with it worldly losses and sufferings, and, in all probability, ignominious and agonizing death. The apostles had neither wealth with which to bribe, nor authority with which to awe, "nor enticing words of man's wisdom" with which to persuade their converts. And this was a time when wealth was the object of universal worship, when force alone could compel to obedience, and eloquence was the only key to the human heart. In the words of Jeremy Taylor, the apostles were to contend "against the philosophy of the world, and the arguments of the subtle, and the sermons of the eloquent, the power of princes, and the interests of states,

the inclinations of nature, and the blindness of zeal, the force of custom and the solicitations of passion, the pleasures of sin and the busy arts of the devil; that is against wit and power, superstition and wilfulness, fame and money, nature and empire, which are all the causes in this world that can make a thing impossible." Who will not conclude with him that the reception of the Gospel under such circumstances "is to be ascribed to the power of God, and is the great demonstration of the resurrection of Jesus?" Those who then embraced the truth could have been actuated only by the love of it. They must have been satisfied by the plainest dictates of their own reason, and by the urgent impulses of conscience, to heed the heavenly call. True there were some who like Ananias and Sapphira and Simon Magus, were guilty of hypocrisy, but when was there a time or an institution which did not number some unworthy members among the good? The converts who had once embraced the faith, with but few exceptions, continued steadfast to the end. We might, indeed, have expected to have been called upon for more allowance than the circumstances really demand. For we should remember that the faith was yet in its infancy; that the means of instruction were few, and that when the seed had sprung up, many tares had deep root by its side. There is a truth which holds good in the special, as well as in the general operations of the Almighty, and the sooner we are familiar with it, and aware of its importance, the better is our faith secured against many a specious foe. This is that in every form, whether it be of truth or providence in which He is manifested to us, He has admitted human agents and human passions to operate with Him.

He often plans the work, and leaves it to man to perform it. He provides the means — their use he commits to us. Let us then be always ready to discriminate between His counsels and our own, and never charge upon His designs that inefficiency or ill success which is properly our own. The Gospel was preached by those who were themselves the living evidences of its truth. It was attested by all the power of visions and of wonders, by the groans of martyrs, and by the triumphant songs of the faith which rose above them. And when the heart was subjected to its sway, it produced the fruits of holiness. Its value never could be lessened by the hypocrisy or apostacy of its professed disciples. On the contrary, the lustre of truth is never brighter, even by the side of the grossest error, than when it is exhibited in contrast with that which imitates its purity.

3. A third point of importance upon which the information contained in the Acts is valuable, consists in the knowledge we may there obtain of the principal objections which were offered to the Gospel, and the early dissensions which arose in the church. "It must needs be that offences come," said the Saviour. The disciples had heard this prophecy, and they expected its fulfilment. If we had not an account of such objections and dissensions, we might well have hesitated to receive the narrations which omitted them. For what would that system of faith or duty have been worth, which in a faithless and perverse generation was received without resistance?

The Gospel offered a pure doctrine, and demanded a life of strict self-discipline, of humane and active usefulness, and of unbending integrity and piety. It was to change the whole constitution of society, and every

human heart. Well might its early advocates prepare themselves for their work as if they were to contend with the prince of darkness. They could not, like the false prophet in the East, present their doctrine in one hand and the sword in the other — nor, like the priests of the Egyptian and Indian superstitions, call to their aid the staff of the civil magistrate. The weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but spiritual. Nor should it be imagined that supernatural aid was always near them. It was only when signal instances called for the arm or the judgment of the Almighty, or the almost exhausted courage of the disciples needed quickening from on high, that miracles and visions were at hand. The apostles themselves did not look for such aid at all times. They knew their foes, and they knew their own powers to subdue them. There were their own countrymen, whose prejudices and vices were familiar to them. The Gospel found its worst enemies among those to whom the words of salvation were first sent. The Jews sought for a sign. They looked for some stupendous display of the Almighty, which like the miracles of their ancient lawgiver, should be manifested at once to their whole nation. They waited for some temporal deliverer, who should place their banner far above the Roman standard which waved over the citadel upon Mount Tabor. But their alleged excuses were but idle tales. They would not believe even when one came unto them from the dead. They hugged themselves still closer in their prejudices, and met their ruin while they were still expecting triumph over their oppressors.

While the Jews sought for a sign, the Greeks demanded wisdom. The people who had given birth to sages and



philosophers, despised the thought of listening to the words of a crucified Galilean. If Paul, when he stood upon Mars' Hill, or in the Corinthian market place, had discoursed upon the genealogies of the gods and goddesses, upon the origin of matter, or the nature of ideas, he would have been unmolested, and perhaps would have been covered with garlands, and borne in a triumphal procession. But coming to them with his tale of Jesus and the resurrection, he appeared "as a setter forth of strange gods." The Jews were angry with the Apostles, the Gentiles treated them with contempt. Besides these principal objections to the Gospel, there were a multitude of others founded upon the lower motives of interest. The sorceries of Elymas, and the incantations of the woman of Philippi, would cease to be a source of terror, and the magical books of Ephesus, with the silver shrines of Demetrius, would no longer be gainful to their possessors.

It was while surrounded on all sides with such obstacles, that Christianity was preached, and still obtained sincere converts. It was a work the arduousness of which can hardly be conceived by us. The apostles knew neither safety nor repose. Nights of travel and of watching, succeeded to days of labor and suffering. There was nothing of pain or privation which they did not endure; but it was to them of little consequence, provided that, in the words of Paul, "Christ was preached."

How discouraging then must have been the sight when they saw dissension and impurity introduced into the little communities which they had established with such untiring self-sacrifice. Such the history informs us was an early effect of Jewish prejudice and Gentile sensuality. With minds but partially instructed in the character

of Christianity, and with hearts but partially subjected to its sway, the Jewish converts maintained the prior obligation of the Gentiles to adopt the Mosaic ritual before they could enjoy the privileges of the Gospel. This prejudice was indeed very natural. It was no slight sacrifice of their own opinions, which permitted the Jews to yield themselves up to the belief in Christ. It struck a severe blow to their own national pride and private hopes. They had looked for far other results attendant upon the coming of the Messiah, than those which they had witnessed. But when they found that all distinctions between Jew and Gentile were now to be abolished, and that there were other ways to the Christian church, besides that which led through their revered temple, their amazement found issue in contention. The Gentile converts, on the other hand, do not appear to have been entirely blameless in this matter. They probably taunted their brethren upon the singular issues of their long cherished pride, or at least were deficient in their respect to fond and pardonable opinions. Besides dissension, immorality seems likewise to have crept into the Athenian churches. This is particularly specified in their abuses of the Lord's Supper, and their imitation, or at least permission, of some idolatrous practices. It was to have been expected, both from the former character of the converts, and their subsequent subjection to the very worst influences, that perfect harmony and purity would have been impossible. And here we must apply the remark already made. We must discriminate between the means which were put into their hands, and the use which they made of them. Christianity is not the author, nor

should it bear the blame of the sad abuses which in every age have been practised by its professors.

4. A fourth use which the Book of Acts will supply, is in the explanation and interpretation of the Epistles, particularly those of Paul. A brother apostle said that these even when they were first written, contained 'some things hard to be understood.'\* Such every one who studies them at this distant day must have found to be the case. Whatley says, 'There appears to be a very remarkable analogy between the treatment to which Paul himself was exposed during his personal ministry on earth, and that which his works have met with since.† The most of such treatment, both of him and of his writings, we should probably ascribe to ignorance. It is lamentable, however, to remark how singularly perverse it has sometimes been. But this is not the place to discuss the matter. The Book of Acts, taken in connexion with the letters of Paul, will furnish us with a very full history of his life. Particulars of importance which are omitted in the one, are given in the other. The technical terms which are used in the Epistles, being more nearly connected with the circumstances to which they relate, stand forth in their full meaning. The history will furnish us with a view of some facts of which the letters afford us but a glimpse. For instance, Paul writing to his convert Timothy, congratulates him because 'that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures.'‡ We inquire how this could have been, since the father of Timothy was a Greek. But if we turn to the history in the Acts, we learn that his mother 'was a Jewess.'§

\* 2 Peter iii. 16.

† Whatley's Essays on St Paul.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

§ Acts xvi. 1.

Many instances might be adduced, where such a remarkable though undesigned coincidence is observable, as to establish the authenticity and genuineness of the writings beyond all cavil and dispute.

Such are some of the principal uses to be derived from the study of this book. Its details are of the highest importance, and of the deepest interest. Its value, compared with the Gospels, bears the same proportion as do the lives and actions it commemorates to those of the Saviour. It has well instructed the succeeding generation of disciples in the completion of that glorious work, the commencement of which, though veiled in mournful scenes of suffering, was so full of interest to all our race.

GEO. E. ELLIS.

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